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T. B. ALDRICH

# Friar Jerome's Beautiful Book Etc.

SELECTED FROM  
CLOTH OF GOLD  
AND  
FLOWER AND THORN



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY  
The Riverside Press, Cambridge  
1892







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To  
**EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.**



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# **FRIAR JEROME'S BEAUTIFUL BOOK, ETC.**

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## **FRIAR JEROME'S BEAUTIFUL BOOK.**

**A. D. 1200.**

**THE Friar Jerome, for some slight sin  
Done in his youth, was struck with woe.  
"When I am dead," quoth Friar Jerome,  
"Surely, I think my soul will go  
Shuddering through the darkened  
spheres,  
Down to eternal fires below !  
I shall not dare from that dread place  
To lift mine eyes to Jesus' face,  
Nor Mary's, as she sits adored  
At the feet of Christ the Lord.  
Alas ! December's all too brief  
For me to hope to wipe away  
The memory of my sinful May !"**

And Friar Jerome was full of grief  
That April evening, as he lay  
On the straw pallet in his cell. <  
He scarcely heard the curfew-bell  
Calling the brotherhood to prayer ; <  
But he arose, for 't was his care  
Nightly to feed the hungry poor <  
That crowded to the Convent door.

His choicest duty it had been :  
But this one night it weighed him down.  
"What work for an immortal soul,  
To feed and clothe some lazy clown !  
Is there no action worth my mood,  
No deed of daring, high and pure,  
That shall, when I am dead, endure,  
A well-spring of perpetual good ?"

And straight he thought of those great  
tomes  
With clamps of gold — the Convent's <  
boast —  
How they endured, while kings and  
realms  
Past into darkness and were lost ;  
How they had stood from age to age,  
Clad in their yellow vellum-mail,

'Gainst which the Paynim's godless rage,  
The Vandal's fire, could naught avail :  
Though heathen sword-blows fell like  
hail,

Though cities ran with Christian blood,  
Imperishable they had stood !

They did not seem like books to him,  
But Heroes, Martyrs, Saints — them-  
selves

The things they told of, not mere books  
Ranged grimly on the oaken shelves.

To those dim alcoves, far withdrawn,  
He turned with measured steps and slow,  
Trimming his lantern as he went ;  
And there, among the shadows, bent  
Above one ponderous folio,  
With whose miraculous text were blent,  
Seraphic faces : Angels, crowned  
With rings of melting amethyst ;  
Mute, patient Martyrs, cruelly bound  
To blazing fagots ; here and there,  
Some bold, serene Evangelist,  
Or Mary in her sunny hair ;  
And here and there from out the words  
A brilliant tropic bird took flight ;  
And through the margins many a vine

Went wandering — roses, red and white,  
Tulip, wind-flower, and columbine  
Blossomed To his believing mind  
These things were real, and the wind,  
Blown through the mullioned window,  
took  
Scent from the lilies in the book. <

“Santa Maria !” cried Friar Jerome,  
“Whatever man illumined this,  
Though he were steeped heart-deep in  
sin,  
Was worthy of unending bliss,  
And no doubt hath it ! Ah ! dear Lord,  
Might I so beautify Thy Word !  
What sacristan, the convents through,  
Transcribes with such precision ? who  
Does such initials as I do ?  
Lo ! I will gird me to this work,  
And save me, ere the one chance slips.  
On smooth, clean parchment I ’ll engross  
The Prophet’s fell Apocalypse ;  
And as I write from day to day,  
Perchance my sins will pass away.”

So Friar Jerome began his Book.  
From break of dawn till curfew-chime <

He bent above the lengthening page,  
Like some rapt poet o'er his rhyme.  
He scarcely paused to tell his beads,  
Except at night ; and then he lay  
And tost, unrestful, on the straw,  
Impatient for the coming day —  
Working like one who feels, perchance,  
That, ere the longed-for goal be won,  
Ere Beauty bare her perfect breast,  
Black Death may pluck him from the  
sun.

At intervals the busy brook,  
Turning the mill-wheel, caught his ear ;  
And through the grating of the cell  
He saw the honeysuckles peer,  
And knew 't was summer, that the sheep  
In fragrant pastures lay asleep, ×  
And felt that, somehow, God was near. ×  
In his green pulpit on the elm, ×  
The robin, abbot of that wood, /  
Held forth by times ; and Friar Jerome  
Listened, and smiled, and understood.

While summer wrapt the blissful land  
What joy it was to labor so,  
To see the long-tressed Angels grow  
Beneath the cunning of his hand,

Vignette and tail-piece subtly wrought !  
And little recked he of the poor  
That missed him at the Convent door ;  
Or, thinking of them, put the thought  
Aside. " I feed the souls of men  
Henceforth, and not their bodies ! " —  
yet

Their sharp, pinched features, now and  
then,  
Stole in between him and his Book,  
And filled him with a vague regret.

Now on that region fell a blight :  
The corn grew cankered in its sheath ;  
And from the verdurous uplands rolled  
A sultry vapor fraught with death —  
A poisonous mist, that, like a pall,  
Hung black and stagnant over all.  
Then came the sickness — the ma-  
lign,  
Green-spotted terror called the Pest,  
That took the light from loving eyes,  
And made the young bride's gentle  
breast  
A fatal pillow. Ah ! the woe, X  
The crime, the madness that befell !  
In one short night that vale became


More foul than Dante's inmost hell.  
Men curst their wives; and mothers left  
Their nursing babes alone to die,  
And wantoned, singing, through the ~~X~~  
streets,  
With shameless brow and frenzied eye;  
And senseless clowns, not fearing  
God —


Such power the spotted fever had —  
Razed Cragwood Castle on the hill,  
Pillaged the wine-bins, and went mad.  
And evermore that dreadful pall  
Of mist hung stagnant over all :  
By day, a sickly light broke through  
The heated fog, on town and field ;  
By night, the moon, in anger, turned ~~X~~  
Against the earth its mottled shield.

Then from the Convent, two and two,  
The Prior chanting at their head,  
The monks went forth to shrive the sick, . .  
And give the hungry grave its dead — ~~X~~  
Only Jerome, he went not forth,  
But hiding in his dusty nook,  
“ Let come what will, I must illumine  
The last ten pages of my Book ! ”  
He drew his stool before the desk,







And sat him down, distraught and wan,  
To paint his daring masterpiece,  
The stately figure of Saint John.  
He sketched the head with pious care,  
Laid in the tint, when, powers of Grace !  
He found a grinning Death's-head there,  
And not the grand Apostle's face !

Then up he rose with one long cry :   
“ 'Tis Satan's self does this,” cried he,  
“ Because I shut and barred my heart  
When Thou didst loudest call to me !  
O Lord, Thou know'st the thoughts of  
men,  
Thou know'st that I did yearn to make  
Thy Word more lovely to the eyes  
Of sinful souls, for Christ his sake !  
Nathless, I leave the task undone :  
I give up all to follow Thee —  
Even like him who gave his nets  
To winds and waves by Galilee ! ”

Which said, he closed the precious  
Book  
In silence, with a reverent hand ;  
And drawing his cowl about his face   
Went forth into the Stricken Land.

And there was joy in heaven that day —  
More joy o'er this forlorn old friar  
Than over fifty sinless men  
Who never struggled with desire !

What deeds he did in that dark town,  
What hearts he soothed with anguish   
torn,  
What weary ways of woe he trod,  
Are written in the Book of God,  
And shall be read at Judgment Morn.  
The weeks crept on, when, one still day,  
God's awful presence filled the sky,  
And that black vapor floated by,  
And lo ! the sickness past away.  
With silvery clang, by thorpe and town,  
The bells made merry in their spires :   
O God ! to think the Pest is flown !  
Men kissed each other on the street,  
And music piped to dancing feet   
The livelong night, by roaring fires !

Then Friar Jerome, a wasted shape —  
For he had taken the Plague at last —  
Rose up, and through the happy town,  
And through the wintry woodlands,   
past

Into the Convent. What a gloom  
Sat brooding in each desolate room !  
What silence in the corridor !  
For of that long, innumerable train .  
Which issued forth a month before  
Scarce twenty had come back again !

Counting his rosary step by step,  
With a forlorn and vacant air,  
Like some unshriven churchyard thing,  
The Friar crawled up the mouldy stair  
To his damp cell, that he might look  
Once more on his beloved Book,

And there it lay upon the stand,  
Open ! — he had not left it so. ✕  
He grasped it, with a cry ; for, lo !  
He saw that some angelic hand,  
While he was gone, had finished it !  
There 't was complete, as he had  
planned ;

There, at the end, stood *Finis*, writ ✕  
And gilded as no man could do —  
Not even that pious anchoret,  
Bilfrid, the wonderful, nor yet  
The miniatore Ethelwold,  
Nor Durham's Bishop, who of old

(England still hoards the priceless  
leaves)

Did the Four Gospels all in gold.  
And Friar Jerome nor spoke nor stirred,  
But, with his eyes fixed on that word,  
He passed from sin and want and scorn ;  
And suddenly the chapel-bells  
Rang in the holy Christmas-Morn ! ✕

In those wild wars which racked the  
land

Since then, and kingdoms rent in twain,  
The Friar's Beautiful Book was lost —  
That miracle of hand and brain :  
Yet, though its leaves were torn and tost,  
The volume was not writ in vain !

## SPRING IN NEW ENGLAND.

### I.

THE long years come and go,  
And the Past,  
The sorrowful, splendid Past,  
With its glory and its woe,  
Seems never to have been.  
The bugle's taunting blast  
Has died away by Southern ford and  
glen :  
The mock-bird sings unfrightened in  
its dell ;  
The ensanguined stream flows pure  
again ;  
Where once the hissing death-bolt fell,  
And all along the artillery's level lines  
Leapt flames of hell,  
The farmer smiles upon the sprouting  
grain,  
And tends his vines.  
Seems never to have been ?  
O sombre days and grand,  
How ye crowd back once more,

*SPRING IN NEW ENGLAND. 21*

Seeing our heroes' graves are green  
By the Potomac and the Cumberland,  
And in the valley of the Shenandoah !

II.

Now while the pale arbutus in our  
woods  
Wakes to faint life beneath the dead  
year's leaves,  
And the bleak North lets loose its wailing  
broods  
Of winds upon us, and the gray sea  
grieves  
Along our coast ; while yet the Winter's  
hand  
Heavily presses on New England's  
heart,  
And Spring averts the sunshine of her  
eyes  
Lest some vain cowslip should untimely  
start —  
While we are housed in this rude season's  
gloom,  
In this rude land,  
Bereft of warmth and bloom,  
We know, far off beneath the Southern  
skies,

## 22 *SPRING IN NEW ENGLAND.*

Where the flush blossoms mock our  
    drifts of snow  
And the lithe vine unfolds its emerald  
    sheen —  
On many a sunny hillside there, we  
    know  
Our heroes' graves are green.

### III.

The long years come, but *they*  
    Come not again !  
Through vapors dense and gray  
    Steals back the May,  
But they come not again —  
    Swept by the battle's fiery breath  
    Down unknown ways of death.  
How can our fancies help but go  
Out from this realm of mist and rain,  
Out from this realm of sleet and snow,  
When the first Southern violets blow ?

### IV.

While yet the year is young  
Many a garland shall be hung  
    In our gardens of the dead ;  
On obelisk and urn

Shall the lilac's purple burn,  
And the wild-rose leaves be shed.  
And afar in the woodland ways,  
Through the rustic church-yard gate  
Matrons and maidens shall pass,  
Striplings and white-haired men,  
And, spreading aside the grass,  
Linger at name and date,  
Remembering old, old days !  
And the lettering on each stone  
Where the mould's green breath has  
blown  
Tears shall wash clear again !

v.

But far away to the South, in the sultry,  
stricken land —  
On the banks of silvery streams gurg-  
ling among their reeds,  
By many a drear morass, where the  
long-necked pelican feeds,  
By many a dark bayou, and blinding  
dune of sand,  
By many a cypress swamp where the  
cayman seeks its prey,  
In many a moss-hung wood, the twi-  
light's haunt by day,



**24 *SPRING IN NEW ENGLAND.***

**And down where the land's parched lip  
drinks at the salt sea-waves,  
And the ghostly sails glide by — there  
are piteous nameless graves.**

**Their names no tongue may tell,  
Buried there where they fell,  
The bravest of our braves !  
Never sweetheart, or friend,  
Wan pale mother, or bride,  
Over these mounds shall bend,  
Tenderly putting aside  
The unremembering grass !  
Never the votive wreath  
For the unknown brows beneath,  
Never a tear, alas !  
How can our fancies help but go  
Out from this realm of mist and rain,  
Out from this realm of sleet and  
snow,  
When the first Southern violets blow ?  
How must our thought bend over  
them,  
Blessing the flowers that cover them —  
Piteous, nameless graves !**

VI.

Ah, but the life they gave  
Is not shut in the grave :  
The valorous spirits freed  
Live in the vital deed !  
Marble shall crumble to dust,  
Plinth of bronze and of stone,  
Carved escutcheon and crest —  
Silently, one by one,  
The sculptured lilies fall :  
Softly the tooth of the rust  
Gnaws through the brazen shield :  
Broken, and covered with stains,  
The crossed stone swords must yield :  
Mined by the frost and the drouth,  
Smitten by north and south,  
Smitten by east and west,  
Down comes column and all !  
But the great deed remains.

VII.

When we remember how they died —  
In dark ravine and on the mountain-side,  
In leaguered fort and fire-encircled  
town,  
Upon the gun-boat's splintered deck,  
And where the iron ships went down —

## **26 SPRING IN NEW ENGLAND.**

How their dear lives were spent,  
In the crushed and reddened wreck,  
By lone lagoons and streams,  
In the weary hospital-tent,  
In the cockpit's crowded hive —  
How they languished and died  
In the black stockades — it seems  
Ignoble to be alive !  
Tears will well to our eyes,  
And the bitter doubt will rise —  
But hush ! for the strife is done,  
Forgiven are wound and scar ;  
The fight was fought and won  
Long since, on sea and shore,  
And every scattered star  
Set in the blue once more :  
We are one as before,  
With the blot from our scutcheon gone !

### **VIII.**

So let our heroes rest  
Upon your sunny breast :  
Keep them, O South, our tender hearts  
and true.  
Keep them, O South, and learn to hold  
them dear  
From year to year !

***SPRING IN NEW ENGLAND. 27***

Never forget,  
Dying for us, they died for you.  
This hallowed dust should knit us closer  
yet.

**IX.**

Hark! 'tis the bluebird's venturous  
strain  
High on the old fringed elm at the  
gate —  
Sweet-voiced, valiant on the sway-  
ing bough,  
Alert, elate,  
Dodging the fitful spits of snow,  
New England's poet-laureate  
Telling us Spring has come again !

## BABY BELL.

### I.

**HAVE** you not heard the poets tell  
How came the dainty Baby Bell  
Into this world of ours ?  
The gates of heaven were left ajar :  
With folded hands and dreamy eyes,  
Wandering out of Paradise,  
She saw this planet, like a star,  
Hung in the glistening depths of  
even —  
Its bridges, running to and fro,  
O'er which the white-winged Angels go,  
Bearing the holy Dead to heaven.  
She touched a bridge of flowers — those  
feet,  
So light they did not bend the bells  
Of the celestial asphodels,  
They fell like dew upon the flowers :  
Then all the air grew strangely sweet !  
And thus came dainty Baby Bell  
Into this world of ours.

## II.

She came and brought delicious May.

The swallows built beneath the  
eaves ;

Like sunlight, in and out the leaves  
The robins went, the livelong day ;

The lily swung its noiseless bell ;

And o'er the porch the trembling  
vine

Seemed bursting with its veins of  
wine.

How sweetly, softly, twilight fell !

O, earth was full of singing-birds

And opening springtide flowers,

When the dainty Baby Bell

Came to this world of ours !

## III.

O Baby, dainty Baby Bell,

How fair she grew from day to day !

What woman-nature filled her eyes,

What poetry within them lay —

Those deep and tender twilight eyes,

So full of meaning, pure and bright

As if she yet stood in the light

Of those oped gates of Paradise.

And so we loved her more and more :

Ah, never in our hearts before

Was love so lovely born !

We felt we had a link between

This real world and that unseen —

The land beyond the morn ;

And for the love of those dear eyes,

For love of her whom God led forth,

(The mother's being ceased on earth

When Baby came from Paradise,) —

For love of Him who smote our lives,

And woke the chords of joy and  
pain,

We said, *Deár Christ!* — our hearts  
bent down

Like violets after rain.

#### IV.

And now the orchards, which were white

And red with blossoms when she  
came,

Were rich in autumn's mellow prime ;

The clustered apples burnt like flame,

The soft-cheeked peaches blushed  
and fell,

The ivory chestnut burst its shell,

The grapes hung purpling in the  
grange :

And time wrought just as rich a  
change

In little Baby Bell.

Her lissome form more perfect grew,  
And in her features we could trace,  
In softened curves, her mother's  
face.

Her angel-nature ripened too :  
We thought her lovely when she came,  
But she was holy, saintly now . . . .  
Around her pale angelic brow  
We saw a slender ring of flame !

## v.

God's hand had taken away the seal  
That held the portals of her speech ;  
And oft she said a few strange words  
Whose meaning lay beyond our  
reach.

She never was a child to us,  
We never held her being's key ;  
*We* could not teach her holy things :  
She was Christ's self in purity.

## vi.

It came upon us by degrees,  
We saw its shadow ere it fell, —  
The knowledge that our God had sent



His messenger for Baby Bell.  
We shuddered with unlanguage pain,  
And all our hopes were changed to  
fears,  
And all our thoughts ran into tears  
Like sunshine into rain.  
We cried aloud in our belief,  
"O, smite us gently, gently, God !  
Teach us to bend and kiss the rod,  
And perfect grow through grief."  
Ah ! how we loved her, God can tell ;  
Her heart was folded deep in ours.  
Our hearts are broken, Baby Bell !

## VII.

At last he came, the messenger,  
The messenger from unseen lands :  
And what did dainty Baby Bell ?  
She only crossed her little hands,  
She only looked more meek and fair !  
We parted back her silken hair,  
We wove the roses round her brow, —  
White buds, the summer's drifted  
snow —  
Wrapt her from head to foot in flow-  
ers . . . .  
And thus went dainty Baby Bell  
Out of this world of ours !

## THE LADY OF CASTELNORE.

A. D. 1700.

### I.

BRÉTAGNE had not her peer. In the  
Province far or near  
There were never such brown tresses,  
such a faultless hand ;  
She had youth, and she had gold, she  
had jewels all untold,  
And many a lover bold wooed the Lady  
of the Land.

### II.

But she, with queenliest grace, bent low  
her pallid face,  
And "Woo me not for Jesus' sake, fair  
gentlemen," she said.  
If they woo'd, then — with a frown she  
would strike their passion down :  
She might have wed a crown to the  
ringlets on her head.

### **34 THE LADY OF CASTELNORE.**

#### **III.**

**From the dizzy castle-tips, hour by hour  
she watched the ships,  
Like sheeted phantoms coming and  
going evermore,  
While the twilight settled down on the  
sleepy seaport town,  
On the gables peaked and brown, that  
had sheltered kings of yore.**

#### **IV.**

**Dusky belts of cedar-wood partly claspt  
the widening flood ;  
Like a knot of daisies lay the hamlets  
on the hill ;  
In the hostelry below sparks of light  
would come and go,  
And faint voices, strangely low, from  
the garrulous old mill.**

#### **V.**

**Here the land in grassy swells gently  
broke ; there sunk in dells  
With mosses green and purple, and  
prongs of rock and peat ;**

*THE LADY OF CASTELNORE.* 35

Here, in statue-like repose, an old  
    wrinkled mountain rose,  
With its hoary head in snows, and wild-  
    roses at its feet.

VI.

And so oft she sat alone in the turret  
    of gray stone,  
And looked across the moorland, so  
    woful, to the sea,  
That there grew a village-cry, how her  
    cheek did lose its dye,  
As a ship, once, sailing by, faded on the  
    sapphire lea.

VII.

Her few walks led all one way, and all  
    ended at the gray  
And ragged, jagged rocks that fringe  
    the lonesome beach ;  
There she would stand, the Sweet !  
    with the white surf at her feet,  
While above her wheeled the fleet spar-  
    row-hawk with startling screech.

36 *THE LADY OF CASTELNORE.*

VIII.

And she ever loved the sea — God's  
half-uttered mystery —  
With its million lips of shells, its never-  
ceasing roar ;  
And 't was well that, when she died,  
they made her a grave beside  
The blue pulses of the tide, by the  
towers of Castelnore.

IX.

Now, one chill November morn, many  
russet autumns gone,  
A strange ship with folded wings lay  
dozing off the lea ;  
It had lain throughout the night with  
its wings of murky white  
Folded, after weary flight — the worn  
nursling of the sea.

X.

Crowds of peasants flocked the sands ;  
there were tears and clasping  
hands ;  
And a sailor from the ship stalked  
through the church-yard gate.

**THE LADY OF CASTELNORE. 37**

Then amid the grass that crept, fading,  
    over her who slept,  
How he hid his face and wept, crying  
    *Late, alas ! too late !*

**XI.**

And they called her cold. God knows.  
    . . . . Underneath the winter snows  
The invisible hearts of flowers grow  
    ripe for blossoming !  
And the lives that look so cold, if their  
    stories could be told,  
Would seem cast in gentler mould,  
    would seem full of love and  
    spring.

## MIANTOWONA.

### I.

LONG ere the Pale Face  
Crossed the Great Water,  
Miantowona  
Passed, with her beauty,  
Into a legend  
Pure as a wild-flower  
Found in a broken  
Ledge by the seaside.

Let us revere them —  
These wildwood legends,  
Born of the camp-fire.  
Let them be handed  
Down to our children —  
Richest of heirlooms.  
No land may claim them :  
They are ours only,  
Like our grand rivers,  
Like our vast prairies,  
Like our dead heroes.

## II.

IN the pine-forest,  
Guarded by shadows,  
Lieth the haunted  
Pond of the Red Men.  
Ringed by the emerald  
Mountains, it lies there  
Like an untarnished  
Buckler of silver,  
Dropped in that valley  
By the Great Spirit !  
Weird are the figures  
Traced on its margins —  
Vine-work and leaf-work,  
Down-drooping fuchsias,  
Knots of sword-grasses,  
Moonlight and starlight,  
Clouds scudding northward.  
Sometimes an eagle  
Flutters across it ;  
Sometimes a single  
Star on its bosom  
Nestles till morning.

Far in the ages,  
Miantowona,



Rose of the Hurons,  
Came to these waters.  
Where the dank greensward  
Slopes to the pebbles,  
Miantowona  
Sat in her anguish.  
Ice to her maidens,  
Ice to the chieftains,  
Fire to her lover !  
Here he had won her,  
Here they had parted,  
Here could her tears flow.  
With unwet eyelash,  
Miantowona  
Nursed her old father,  
Gray-eyed Tawanda,  
Oldest of Hurons,  
Soothed his complainings,  
Smiled when he chid her  
Vaguely for nothing —  
He was so weak now,  
Like a shrunk cedar  
White with the hoar-frost.  
Sometimes she gently  
Linked arms with maidens,  
Joined in their dances :  
Not with her people,

Not in the wigwam,  
Wept for her lover.  
Ah ! who was like him ?  
Fleet as an arrow,  
Strong as a bison,  
Lithe as a panther,  
Soft as the south-wind,  
Who was like Wawah ?  
There is one other  
Stronger and fleeter,  
Bearing no wampum,  
Wearing no war-paint,  
Ruler of councils,  
Chief of the war-path —  
Who can gainsay him,  
Who can defy him ?  
His is the lightning,  
His is the whirlwind,  
Let us be humble,  
We are but ashes —  
'Tis the Great Spirit !

Ever at nightfall  
Miantowona  
Strayed from the lodges,  
Passed through the shadows

Into the forest :  
There by the pond-side  
Spread her black tresses  
Over her forehead.  
Sad is the loon's cry  
Heard in the twilight;  
Sad is the night-wind,  
Moaning and moaning ;  
Sadder the stifled  
Sob of a widow.

Low on the pebbles  
Murmured the water :  
Often she fancied  
It was young Wawah  
Playing the reed-flute.  
Sometimes a dry branch  
Snapped in the forest :  
Then she rose, startled,  
Ruddy as sunrise,  
Warm for his coming !  
But when he came not,  
Back through the darkness,  
Half broken-hearted,  
Miantowona  
Went to her people.

When an old oak dies,  
First 't is the tree-tops,  
Then the low branches,  
Then the gaunt stem goes :  
So fell Tawanda,  
Oldest of Hurons,  
Chief of the chieftains.

*Miantowona*

Wept not, but softly  
Closed the sad eyelids ;  
With her own fingers  
Fastened the deer-skin  
Over his shoulders ;  
Then laid beside him  
Ash-bow and arrows,  
Pipe-bowl and wampum,  
Dried corn and bear-meat —  
All that was needful  
On the long journey.  
Thus old Tawanda,  
Went to the hunting  
Grounds of the Red Man.

Then, as the dirges  
Rose from the village,  
*Miantowona*

Stole from the mourners,  
Stole through the cornfields,  
Passed like a phantom  
Into the shadows  
Through the pine-forest.

One who had watched her —  
It was Nahoho,  
Loving her vainly —  
Saw, as she passed him,  
That in her features  
Made his stout heart quail.  
He could but follow.  
Quick were her footsteps,  
Light as a snow-flake,  
Leaving no traces  
On the white clover.

Like a trained runner,  
Winner of prizes,  
Into the woodlands  
Plunged the young chieftain.  
Once he abruptly  
Halted, and listened ;  
Then he sped forward  
Faster and faster  
Toward the bright water.

Breathless he reached it.  
Why did he crouch then,  
Stark as a statue ?

What did he see there  
Could so appall him ?  
Only a circle  
Swiftly expanding,  
Fading before him ;  
But, as he watched it,  
Up from the centre,  
Slowly, superbly  
Rose a Pond-Lily.

One cry of wonder,  
Shrill as the loon's call,  
Rang through the forest,  
Startling the silence,  
Startling the mourners  
Chanting the death-song.  
Forth from the village,  
Flocking together  
Came all the Hurons —  
Striplings and warriors,  
Maidens and old men,  
Squaws with papposes.

No word was spoken :  
There stood the Hurons  
On the dank greensward,  
With their swart faces  
Bowed in the twilight.  
What did they see there ?  
Only a Lily  
Rocked on the azure  
Breast of the water.

Then they turned sadly  
Each to the other,  
Tenderly murmuring,  
“ Miantowona ! ”  
Soft as the dew falls  
Down through the midnight,  
Cleaving the starlight,  
Echo repeated,  
“ Miantowona ! ”

## TITA'S TEARS.

### A FANTASY.

A CERTAIN man of Ischia — it is thus  
The story runs — one Lydus Claudius,  
After a life of threescore years and ten,  
Passed suddenly from out the world of  
men  
Into the world of shadows.

In a vale  
Where shoals of spirits against the  
moonlight pale  
Surged ever upward, in a wan-lit place  
Near heaven, he met a Presence face  
to face —

A figure like a carving on a spire,  
Shrouded in wings and with a fillet of  
fire

About the brows — who stayed him  
there, and said :

“ This the gods grant to thee, O newly  
dead !

Whatever thing on earth thou holdest  
dear



Shall, at thy bidding, be transported  
here,

Save wife or child, or any living thing."

Then straightway Claudius fell to wondering

What he should wish for. Having  
heaven at hand,

His wants were few, as you can understand.

Riches and titles, matters dear to us,  
To him, of course, were now superfluous :

But Tita, small brown Tita, his young  
wife,

A two weeks' bride when he took leave  
of life,

What would become of her without his  
care ?

Tita, so rich, so thoughtless, and so  
fair !

At present crushed with sorrow, to be  
sure —

But by and by ? What earthly griefs  
endure ?

They pass like joys. A year, three  
years at most,

And would she mourn her lord, so  
quickly lost ?

With fine, prophetic ear, he heard afar  
The tingling of some horrible guitar  
Under her balcony. "Such thing could  
be,"

Sighed Claudius ; "I would she were  
with me,  
Safe from all harm." But as that wish  
was vain,

He let it drift from out his troubled  
brain

(His highly trained austerity was such  
That self-denial never cost him much),  
And strove to think what object he  
might name

Most closely linked with the bereaved  
dame.

Her wedding ring? — 't would be too  
small to wear ;

Perhaps a ringlet of her raven hair ?

If not, her portrait, done in cameo,

Or on a background of pale gold ? But  
no,

Such trifles jarred with his severity.

At length he thought : "The thing most  
meet for me

Would be that antique flask wherein  
my bride

Let fall her heavy tears the night I  
died."

(It was a custom of that simple day  
To have one's tears sealed up and laid  
away,

As everlasting tokens of regret—  
They find the bottles in Greek ruins  
yet.)

For this he wished, then.

Swifter than a thought  
The Presence vanished, and the flask  
was brought—

Slender, bell-mouthed, and painted all  
around

With jet-black tulips on a saffron  
ground ;

A tiny jar, of porcelain if you will,  
Which twenty tears would rather more  
than fill.

With careful fingers Claudius broke the  
seal

When, suddenly, a well-known muffled  
peal

Of laughter leapt from out the vial's  
throat,

And died, as dies the wood-bird's dis-  
tant note.

*TITA'S TEARS.* 51

Claudius stared; then, struck with  
strangest fears,  
Reversed the flask —  
Alas, for Tita's tears !

## PAMPINA.

LYING by the summer sea  
I had a dream of Italy.

Chalky cliffs and miles of sand,  
Mossy reefs and salty caves,  
Then the sparkling emerald waves,  
Faded; and I seemed to stand,  
Myself a languid Florentine,  
In the heart of that fair land.  
And in a garden cool and green,  
Boccaccio's own enchanted place,  
I met Pampina face to face —  
A maid so lovely that to see  
Her smile is to know Italy.  
Her hair was like a coronet  
Upon her Grecian forehead set,  
Where one gem glistened sunnily  
Like Venice, when first seen at sea.  
I saw within her violet eyes  
The starlight of Italian skies,  
And on her brow and breast and hand  
The olive of her native land.

And, knowing how in other times  
Her lips were ripe with Tuscan rhymes  
Of love and wine and dance, I spread  
My mantle by an almond-tree,  
And "Here, beneath the rose," I said,  
"I'll hear thy Tuscan melody."  
I heard a tale that was not told .  
In those ten dreamy days of old,  
When Heaven, for some divine offence,  
Smote Florence with the pestilence ;  
And in that garden's odorous shade  
The dames of the Decameron,  
With each a loyal lover, strayed,  
To laugh and sing, at sorest need,  
To lie in the lilies in the sun  
With glint of plume and silver brede.  
And while she whispers in my ear,  
The pleasant Arno murmurs near,  
The dewy, slim chameleons run  
Through twenty colors in the sun ;  
The breezes blur the fountain's glass,  
And wake Æolian melodies,  
And scatter from the scented trees  
The lemon-blossoms on the grass.

The tale ? I have forgot the tale —  
A Lady all for love forlorn,

A rosebud, and a nightingale  
That bruised his bosom on the thorn ;  
A jar of rubies buried deep,  
A glen, a corpse, a child asleep,  
A monk, that was no monk at all,  
In the moonlight by a castle wall.

Now while the large-eyed Tuscan wove  
The twisted thread of her romance —  
Which I have lost by grievous chance —  
The one dear woman that I love,  
Beside me in our sea-side nook,  
Closed a white finger in her book,  
Half vext that she should read, and  
weep

For Petrarch, to a man asleep !  
And scorning me, so tame and cold,  
She rose, and wandered down the shore,  
Her wine-dark drapery, fold in fold,  
Imprisoned by an ivory hand ;  
And on a ledge of granite, half in sand,  
She stood, and looked at Appledore.

And waking, I beheld her there  
Sea-dreaming in the moted air,  
A siren lithe and debonair,  
With wristlets woven of scarlet weeds,

And oblong lucent amber beads  
Of sea-kelp shining in her hair.  
And as I thought of dreams, and how  
The something in us never sleeps,  
But laughs, or sings, or moans, or weeps,  
She turned — and on her breast and  
brow

I saw the tint that seemed not won  
From kisses of New England sun ;  
I saw on brow and breast and hand  
The olive of a sunnier land.  
She turned — and, lo ! within her eyes  
There lay the starlight of Italian skies.

Most dreams are dark, beyond the range  
Of reason ; oft we cannot tell  
If they are born of heaven or hell :  
But to my soul it seems not strange  
That, lying by the summer sea,  
With that dark woman watching me,  
I slept and dreamed of Italy.



## THE GUERDON.

VEDDER! this legend, if it had its due,  
Would not be sung by me, but told by you  
In colors such as Tintoretto knew.

SOOTHED by the fountain's drowsy mur-  
muring —

Or was it by the west-wind's indolent  
wing? —

The grim court-poet fell asleep one day  
In the lords' chamber, when chance  
brought that way

The Princess Margaret with a merry  
train

Of damozels and ladies — flippant, vain  
Court-butterflies — midst whom fair  
Margaret

Swayed like a rathe and slender lily set  
In rustling leaves, for all her drapery  
Was green and gold, and lovely as could  
be.

Midway in hall the fountain rose and  
fell,  
Filling a listless Naiad's outstretched  
shell,

And weaving rainbows in the shifting  
light.

Upon the carven friezes, left and right,  
Was pictured Pan asleep beside his  
reed.

In this place all things seemed asleep,  
indeed —

The hook-billed parrot on his pendent  
ring,

Sitting high-shouldered, half forgot to  
swing ;

The wind scarce stirred the hangings at  
the door,

And from the silken arras evermore  
Yawned drowsy dwarfs with satyr's face  
and hoof.

A forest of gold pillars propped the  
roof,

And like one slim gold pillar over-  
thrown,

The sunlight through a great stained  
window shone

And lay across the body of Alain.

You would have thought, perchance, the  
man was slain :

As if the checkered column in its fall

Had caught and crushed him, he lay  
dead to all.  
The parrot's gray bead eye as good as  
said,  
Unclosing viciously, "The clown is  
dead."  
A dragon-fly in narrowing circles neared,  
And lit, secure, upon the dead man's  
beard,  
Then spread its iris vans in quick dis-  
may,  
And into the blue summer sped away !

Little was his of outward grace to win  
The eyes of maids, but white the soul  
within.  
Misshaped, and hideous to look upon  
Was this man, dreaming in the noon-  
tide sun,  
With sunken eyes and winter-whitened  
hair,  
And sallow cheeks deep seamed with  
thought and care.  
And so the laughing ladies of the court,  
Coming upon him suddenly, stopped  
short,  
And shrunk together with a nameless  
dread ;

Some, but fear held them, would have  
turned and fled,  
Seeing the uncouth figure lying there.  
But Princess Margaret, with her heavy  
hair  
From out its diamond fillet rippling  
down,  
Slipped from the group, and plucking  
back her gown  
With white left hand, stole softly to his  
side —  
The fair court gossips staring, curious-  
eyed,  
Half mockingly. A little while she  
stood,  
Finger on lip; then, with the agile blood  
Climbing her cheek, and silken lashes  
wet —  
She scarce knew what vague pity or re-  
gret  
Wet them — she stooped, and for a mo-  
ment's space  
Her golden tresses touched the sleeper's  
face.  
Then she stood straight, as lily on its  
stem,  
But hearing her ladies titter, turned on  
them

Her great queen's eyes, grown black  
with scornful frown —

Great eyes that looked the shallow  
women down.

“Nay, not for love” — one rosy palm  
she laid

Softly against her bosom — “as I'm a  
maid !

Full well I know what cruel things you  
say

Of this and that, but hold your peace to-  
day.

I pray you think no evil thing of this.

Nay, not for love's sake did I give the  
kiss,

Not for his beauty who's nor fair nor  
young,

But for the songs which those mute lips  
have sung ! ”

That was a right brave princess, one, I  
hold,

Worthy to wear a crown of beaten gold.

## THE LEGEND OF ARA-CÆLI.

### I.

LOOKING at Fra Gervasio,  
Wrinkled and withered and old and  
gray,  
A dry Franciscan from crown to toe,  
You would never imagine, by any chance,  
That, in the convent garden one day,  
He spun this thread of golden romance.

Romance to me, but to him, indeed,  
'T was a matter that did not hold a  
doubt ;

A miracle, nothing more nor less.  
Did I think it strange that, in our need,  
Leaning from Heaven to our distress,  
The Virgin brought such things about —  
Gave mute things speech, made dead  
things move ? —

Mother of Mercy, Lady of Love !  
Besides, I might, if I wished, behold  
The Bambino's self in his cloth of gold  
And silver tissue, lying in state  
In the Sacristy. Would the signor  
wait ?

## 62 THE LEGEND OF ARA-CŒLI.

Whoever will go to Rome may see,  
In the chapel of the Sacristy  
Of Ara-Cœli, the Sainted Child —  
Garnished from throat to foot with  
rings  
And brooches and precious offerings,  
And its little nose kissed quite away  
By dying lips. At Epiphany,  
If the holy winter day prove mild,  
It is shown to the wondering, gaping  
crowd  
On the church's steps — held high  
aloft —  
While every sinful head is bowed,  
And the music plays, and the censers'  
soft  
White breath ascends like silent prayer.

Many a beggar kneeling there,  
Tattered and hungry, without a home,  
Would not envy the Pope of Rome,  
If he, the beggar, had half the care  
Bestowed on *him* that falls to the share  
Of yonder Image — for you must know  
It has its minions to come and go,  
Its perfumed chamber, remote and still,  
Its silken couch, and its jewelled throne,

*THE LEGEND OF ARA-CÆLI.* 63

And a special carriage of its own  
To take the air in, when it will.  
And though it may neither drink nor  
eat,

By a nod to its ghostly seneschal  
It could have of the choicest wine and  
meat.

Often some princess, brown and tall,  
Comes, and unclasping from her arm  
The glittering bracelet, leaves it, warm  
With her throbbing pulse, at the Baby's  
feet.

Ah, he is loved by high and low,  
Adored alike by simple and wise.  
The people kneel to him in the street.  
What a felicitous lot is his —  
To lie in the light of ladies' eyes,  
Petted and pampered, and never to  
know

The want of a dozen *soldi* or so !  
And what does he do for all of this ?  
What does the little Bambino do ?  
It cures the sick, and, in fact, 't is said  
Can almost bring life back to the dead.  
Who doubts it ? Not Fra Gervasio.  
When one falls ill, it is left alone  
For a while with one — and the fever's  
gone !



## 64 THE LEGEND OF ARA-CŒLI.

At least, 't was once so ; but to-day  
It is never permitted, unattended  
By monk or priest, to work its lure  
At sick folks' beds — all that was ended  
By one poor soul whose feeble clay  
Satan tempted and made secure.

It was touching this very point the friar  
Told me the legend, that afternoon,  
In the cloisteral garden all on fire  
With scarlet poppies and golden stalks.  
Here and there on the sunny walks,  
Startled by some slight sound we made,  
A lizard, awaking from its swoon,  
Shot like an arrow into the shade.  
I can hear the fountain's languorous  
tune,

(How it comes back, that hour in June  
When just to exist was joy enough ! )  
I can see the olives, silvery-gray,  
The carven masonry rich with stains,  
The gothic windows with lead-set panes,  
The flag-paved cortile, the convent  
grates,  
And Fra Gervasio holding his snuff  
In a squirrel-like, meditative way  
'Twixt finger and thumb. But the Leg-  
end waits.

II.

It was long ago (so long ago  
That Fra Gervasio did not know  
What year of our Lord), there came to  
Rome

Across the Campagna's flaming red,  
A certain Filippo and his wife —  
Peasants, and very newly wed.  
In the happy spring and blossom of life,  
When the light heart chirrup to lovers  
calls,

These two, like a pair of birds, had  
come  
And built their nest 'gainst the city's  
walls.

He, with his scanty garden-plots,  
Raised flowers and fruit for the market-  
place,  
Where she, with her pensile, flower-like  
face —

Own sister to her forget-me-nots —  
Played merchant: and so they thrived  
apace,

In humble content, with humble cares  
And modest longings, till, unawares,

66 THE LEGEND OF ARA-CÆLI.

Sorrow crept on them ; for to their nest  
Had come no little ones, and at last,  
When six or seven summers had past,  
Seeing no baby at her breast,  
The husband brooded, and then grew  
cold;  
Scolded and fretted over this —  
Who would tend them when they were  
old,  
And palsied, maybe, sitting alone,  
Hungry, beside the cold hearth-stone ?  
Not to have children, like the rest !  
It cankered the very heart of bliss.

Then he fell into indolent ways,  
Neglecting the garden for days and  
days,  
Playing at *mora*, drinking wine,  
With this and that one — letting the  
vine  
Run riot and die for want of care,  
And the choke-weeds gather ; for it was  
spring,  
When everything needed nurturing.  
But he would drowse for hours in the  
sun,  
Or sit on the broken step by the shed,

*THE LEGEND OF ARA-CÆLI. 67*

Like a man whose honest toil is done,  
Sullen, with never a word to spare,  
Or a word that were better all unsaid.

And Nina, so light of thought before,  
Singing about the cottage door  
In her mountain dialect — sang no more ;  
But came and went, sad-faced and shy,  
Wishing, at times, that she might die,  
Brooding and fretting in her turn.  
Often, in passing along the street,  
Her basket of flowers poised, peasant-  
wise,

On a lustrous braided coil of her hair,  
She would halt, and her dusky cheek  
would burn

Like a poppy, beholding at her feet  
Some stray little urchin, dirty and bare.  
And sudden tears would spring to her  
eyes

That the tiny waif was not her own,  
To fondle, and kiss, and teach to pray.  
Then she passed onward, making moan.  
Sometimes she would stand in the  
sunny square,

Like a slim bronze statue of Despair,  
Watching the children at their play.

## 68 THE LEGEND OF ARA-CÆLI.

In the broad piazza was a shrine,  
With Our Lady holding on her knee  
A small, nude waxen effigy.  
Nina passed by it every day,  
And morn and even, in rain or shine,  
Repeated an *ave* there. "Divine  
Mother," she'd cry, as she turned away,  
"Sitting in paradise, undefiled,  
O, have pity on my distress!"  
Then glancing back at the rosy Child,  
She would cry to it, in her helplessness,  
"Pray her to send the like to me!"

Now once as she knelt before the saint,  
Lifting her hands in silent pain,  
She paled, and her heavy heart grew  
faint  
At a thought which flashed across her  
brain —  
The blinding thought that, perhaps if  
she  
Had lived in the world's miraculous  
morn,  
God might have chosen *her* to be  
The mother — O heavenly ecstasy! —  
Of the little babe in the manger born!  
She, too, was a peasant girl, like her,

*THE LEGEND OF ARA-CÆLI. 69*

The wife of the lowly carpenter !  
Like Joseph's wife, a peasant girl !

Her strange little head was in a whirl  
As she rose from her knees to wander  
home,

Leaving her basket at the shrine ;  
So dazed was she, she scarcely knew  
The old familiar streets of Rome,  
Nor whither she wished to go, in fine ;  
But wandered on, now crept, now flew,  
In the gathering twilight, till she came  
Breathless, bereft of sense and sight,  
To the gloomy Arch of Constantine,  
And there they found her, late that  
night,  
With her cheeks like snow and her lips  
like flame !

Many a time from day to day,  
She heard, as if in a troubled dream,  
Footsteps around her, and some one  
saying —

Was it Filippo ? — “ Is she dead ? ”  
Then it was some one near her praying,  
And she was drifting — drifting away  
From saints and martyrs in endless  
glory !

70 *THE LEGEND OF ARA-CÆLI.*

She seemed to be floating down a stream,  
Yet knew she was lying in her bed.  
The fancy held her that she had died,  
And this was her soul in purgatory,  
Until, one morning, two holy men  
From the convent came, and laid at her  
side

The Bambino. Blessed Virgin ! then  
Nina looked up, and laughed, and wept,  
And folded it close to her heart, and  
slept.

Slept such a soft, refreshing sleep,  
That when she awoke her eyes had  
taken

That hyaline lustre, dewy, deep,  
Of violets when they first awaken ;  
And the half-unravelled, fragile thread  
Of life was knitted together again.  
But she shrunk with sudden, strange  
new pain,

And seemed to droop like a flower, the  
day

The Capuchins came, with solemn tread,  
To carry the Miracle Child away !

III.

ERE spring in the heart of pansies  
burned,  
Or the buttercup had loosed its gold,  
Nina was busy as ever of old  
With fireside cares ; but was not the  
same,  
For from the hour when she had turned  
To clasp the Image the fathers brought  
To her dying-bed, a single thought  
Had taken possession of her brain :  
A purpose, as steady as the flame  
Of a lamp in some cathedral crypt,  
Had lighted her on her bed of pain ;  
The thirst and the fever, they had slipt  
Away like visions, but this had stayed —  
To have the Bambino brought again,  
To have it, and keep it for her own !  
That was the secret dream which made  
Life for her now — in the streets, alone,  
At night, and morning, and when she  
prayed.

How should she wrest it from the hand  
Of the jealous Church ? How keep the  
Child ?



## **72 THE LEGEND OF ARA-CÆLI.**

Flee with it into some distant land —  
Like mother Mary from Herod's ire ?  
Ah, well, she knew not ; she only knew  
It was written down in the Book of Fate  
That she should have her heart's desire,  
And very soon now, for of late,  
In a dream, the little thing had smiled  
Up in her face, with one eye's blue  
Peering from underneath her breast,  
Which the baby fingers had softly prest  
Aside, to look at her ! Holy one !  
But that should happen ere all was done.

Lying dark in the woman's mind —  
Unknown, like a seed in fallow ground —  
Was the germ of a plan, confused and  
    blind  
At first, but which, as the weeks rolled  
    round,  
Reached light, and flowered, — a subtile  
    flower,  
Deadly as nightshade. In that same  
    hour  
She sought the husband and said to him,  
With crafty tenderness in her eyes  
And treacherous archings of her brows,  
" Filippo, mio, thou lov'st me well ?

**THE LEGEND OF ARA-CŒLI. 73**

Truly? Then get thee to the house  
Of the long-haired Jew Ben Raphaim —  
Seller of curious tapestries,  
(Ah, he hath everything to sell !)  
The cunning carver of images —  
And bid him to carve thee to the life  
A *bambinetto* like that they gave  
In my arms, to hold me from the grave  
When the fever pierced me like a knife.  
Perhaps, if we set the image there  
By the Cross, the saints would hear the  
prayer  
Which in all these years they have not  
heard.”

Then the husband went, without a word,  
To the crowded Ghetto ; for since the  
days  
Of Nina's illness, the man had been  
A tender husband — with lover's ways  
Striving, as best he might, to wean  
The wife from her sadness, and to  
bring  
Back to the home whence it had fled  
The happiness of that laughing spring  
When they, like a pair of birds, had  
wed.

#### 74 *THE LEGEND OF ARA-CŒLI.*

The image! It was a woman's whim—  
They were full of whims. But what to  
him

Were a dozen pieces of silver spent,  
If it made her happy? And so he went  
To the house of the Jew Ben Raphaim.  
And the carver heard, and bowed, and  
smiled,

And fell to work as if he had known  
The thought that lay in the woman's  
brain,

And somehow taken it for his own:  
For even before the month was flown  
He had carved a figure so like the Child  
Of Ara-Cœli, you'd not have told,  
Had both been decked with jewel and  
chain

And dressed alike in a dress of gold,  
Which was the true one of the twain.

When Nina beheld it first, her heart  
Stood still with wonder. The skilful Jew  
Had given the eyes the tender blue,  
And the cheeks the delicate olive hue,  
And the form almost the curve and line  
Of the Image the good Apostle made  
Immortal with his miraculous art,

*THE LEGEND OF ARA-CŒLI.* 75

What time the sculptor<sup>1</sup> dreamed in the  
    shade  
Under the skies of Palestine.  
The bright new coins that clinked in  
    the palm  
Of the carver in wood were blurred and  
    dim  
Compared with the eyes that looked at  
    him  
From the low sweet brows, so seeming  
    calm;  
Then he went his way, and her joy broke  
    free,  
And Filippo smiled to hear Nina sing  
In the old, old fashion — carolling  
Like a very thrush, with many a trill  
And long-drawn, flute-like, honeyed  
    note,  
Till the birds in the farthest mulberry,  
Each outstretching its amber bill,  
Answered her with melodious throat.

Thus sped two days ; but on the third

<sup>1</sup> According to the monastic legend, the *Santissimo Bambino* was carved by a pilgrim, out of a tree which grew on the Mount of Olives, and painted by St. Luke while the pilgrim was sleeping over his work.

76 *THE LEGEND OF ARA-CÆLI.*

Her singing ceased, and there came a  
change

As of death on Nina; her talk grew  
strange,

Then she sunk in a trance, nor spoke  
nor stirred ;

And the husband, wringing his hands,  
dismayed,

Watched by the bed ; but she breathed  
no word

That night, nor until the morning broke,  
When she roused from the spell, and  
feebly laid

Her hand on Filippo's arm, and spoke :

" Quickly, Filippo ! get thee gone

To the holy fathers, and beg them send  
The Bambino hither " — her cheeks  
were wan

And her eyes like coals — " O, go, my  
friend,

Or all is said ! " Through the morn-  
ing's gray

Filippo hurried, like one distraught,

To the monks, and told his tale ; and  
they,

Straight after matins, came and brought  
The Miracle Child, and went their way.

*THE LEGEND OF ARA-CÆLI. 77*

Once more in her arms was the Infant  
laid,  
After these weary months, once more !  
Yet the woman seemed like a thing of  
stone  
While the dark-robed fathers knelt and  
prayed ;  
But the instant the holy friars were gone  
She arose, and took the broidered  
gown  
From the Baby Christ, and the yellow  
crown  
And the votive brooches and rings it  
wore,  
Till the little figure, so gay before  
In its princely apparel, stood as bare  
As your ungloved hand. With tender-  
est care,  
At her feet, 'twixt blanket and counter-  
pane,  
She hid the Babe ; and then, reaching  
down  
To the coffer wherein the thing had lain,  
Drew forth Ben Raphaim's manikin  
In haste, and dressed it in robe and  
crown,  
With lace and bawble and diamond-pin.

78 *THE LEGEND OF ARA-CŒLI.*

This finished, she turned to stone again,  
And lay as one would have thought  
quite dead,

If it had not been for a spot of red  
Upon either cheek. At the close of day  
The Capuchins came, with solemn tread,  
And carried the false bambino away !

Over the vast Campagna's plain,  
At sunset, a wind began to blow  
(From the Apennines it came, they say),  
Softly at first, and then to grow —  
As the twilight gathered and hurried  
by —

To a gale, with sudden tumultuous rain  
And thunder muttering far away.

When the night was come, from the  
blackened sky

The spear-tongued lightning slipped  
like a snake

And the great clouds clashed, and  
seemed to shake

The earth to its centre. Then swept  
down

Such a storm as was never seen in  
Rome

By any one living in that day.

Not a soul dared venture from his home,

*THE LEGEND OF ARA-CŒLI. 79*

Not a soul in all the crowded town.  
Dumb beasts dropped dead, with terror,  
in stall ;

Great chimney-stacks were overthrown,  
And about the streets the tiles were  
blown

Like leaves in autumn. A fearful night,  
With ominous voices in the air !

Indeed, it seemed like the end of all.  
In the convent, the monks for very  
fright

Went not to bed, but each in his cell  
Counted his beads by the taper's light,  
Quaking to hear the dreadful sounds,  
And shrivelling in the lightning's glare.  
It appeared as if the rivers of Hell  
Had risen, and overleaped their bounds.

In the midst of this, at the convent door,  
Above the tempest's raving and roar  
Came a sudden knocking ! Mother of  
Grace,

What desperate wretch was forced to  
face

Such a night as that was out-of-doors ?  
Across the echoless, stony floors  
Into the windy corridors



**80 THE LEGEND OF ARA-CÆLI.**

The monks came flocking, and down  
the stair,  
Silently, glancing each at each,  
As if they had lost the power of speech.  
Yes — it was some one knocking there!  
And then — strange thing! — untouched  
by a soul  
The bell of the convent 'gan to toll!  
It curdled the blood beneath their hair.

Reaching the court, the brothers stood  
Huddled together, pallid and mute,  
By the massive door of iron-clamped  
wood,  
Till one old monk, more resolute  
Than the others — a man of pious  
will —  
Stepped forth, and letting his lantern  
rest  
On the pavement, crouched upon his  
breast  
And peeped through a chink there was  
between  
The cedar door and the sunken sill.  
At the instant a flash of lightning came,  
Seeming to wrap the world in flame.  
He gave but a glance, and straight  
arose

*THE LEGEND OF ARA-CÆLI. 81*

With his face like a corpse's. What  
had he seen?

Two dripping, little pink-white toes!  
Then, like a man gone suddenly wild,  
He tugged at the bolts, flung down the  
chain,

And there, in the night and wind and  
rain —

Shivering, piteous, and forlorn,  
And naked as ever it was born —  
On the threshold stood the **SAINTED**  
**CHILD!**

"Since then," said Fra Gervasio,  
"We have never let the Bambino go  
Unwatched — no, not by a prince's bed.  
Ah, signor, it made a dreadful stir."

"And the woman — Nina — what of  
her?

Had she no story?" He bowed his  
head,

And knitting his meagre fingers, so —  
"In that night of wind and wrath," said  
he,

"There was wrought in Rome a mys-  
tery.

What know I, signor? They found her  
dead!" 6

## THE PIAZZA OF ST. MARK AT MIDNIGHT.

HUSHED is the music, hushed the hum  
of voices ;

Gone is the crowd of dusky promena-  
ders —

Slender-waisted, almond-eyed Venetians,  
Princes and paupers. Not a single foot-  
fall

Sounds in the arches of the Procuratie.  
One after one, like sparks in cindered  
paper,

Faded the lights out in the goldsmiths'  
windows.

Drenched with the moonlight lies the  
still Piazza.

Fair as the palace builded for Aladdin,  
Yonder St. Mark uplifts its sculptured  
splendor —

Intricate fretwork, Byzantine mosaic,  
Color on color, column upon column,  
Barbaric, wonderful, a thing to kneel to !

*ST. MARK AT MIDNIGHT.* 83

Over the portal stand the four gilt  
horses,  
Gilt hoof in air, and wide distended nos-  
tril,  
Fiery, untamed, as in the days of Nero.  
Skyward, a cloud of domes and spires  
and crosses ;  
Earthward, black shadows flung from  
jutting stone-work.  
High over all the slender Campanile  
Quivers, and seems a falling shaft of  
silver !

Hushed is the music, hushed the hum  
of voices.  
From coigne and cornice and fantastic  
gargoyle,  
At intervals the moan of dove or pigeon,  
Fairily faint, floats off into the moon-  
light.  
This, and the murmur of the Adriatic,  
Lazily restless, lapping the mossed mar-  
ble,  
Staircase or buttress, scarcely break the  
stillness.  
Deeper each moment seems to grow the  
silence,

**84    *ST. MARK AT MIDNIGHT.***

**Denser the moonlight in the still Piazza.  
Hark ! on the Tower above the ancient  
          gateway,  
The twin bronze Vulcans, with their pon-  
          derous hammers,  
Hammer the midnight on their brazen  
          bell there !**

## A PRELUDE.

HASSAN BEN ABDUL at the Ivory Gate  
Of Bagdad sat and chattered in the sun,  
Like any magpie chattered to himself  
And four lank, swarthy Arab boys that  
stopt

A gambling game with peach-pits, and  
drew near.

Then Iman Khan, the friend of thirsty  
souls,

The seller of pure water, ceased his cry,  
And placed his water-skins against the  
gate —

They looked so like him, with their sal-  
low cheeks

Puffed out like Imān's. Then a eunuch  
came

And swung a pack of sweetmeats from  
his head,

And stood — a hideous pagan cut in jet.  
And then a Jew, whose sandal-straps  
were red

With desert-dust, limped, cringing, to  
the crowd —

He, too, would listen; and close after  
him

A jeweller that glittered like his shop.

Then two blind mendicants, who wished  
to go

Six diverse ways at once, came stum-  
bling by,

But hearing Hassan chatter, sat them  
down.

And if the Khaleef had been riding near,  
He would have paused to listen like the  
rest,

For Hassan's fame was ripe in all the  
East.

From white-walled Cairo to far Ispahan,  
From Mecca to Damascus, he was  
known,

Hassan, the Arab with the Singing  
Heart.

His songs were sung by boatmen on the  
Nile,

By Beddowee maidens, and in Tartar  
camps,

While all men loved him as they loved  
their eyes;

And when he spake, the wisest, next to  
him,

Was he who listened. And thus Has-  
san sung.

— And I, a stranger, lingering in Bag-  
dad,

Half English and half Arab, by my  
beard !

Caught at the gilded epic as it grew,  
And for my Christian brothers wrote it  
down.



## THE METEMPSYCHOSIS.

ABOVE the petty passions of the crowd  
I stand in frozen marble like a god,  
Inviolatè, and ancient as the moon.  
The thing I am, and not the thing  
    Man is,  
Fills my deep dreaming. Let him moan  
    and die ;  
For he is dust that shall be laid again :  
I know my own creation was divine.  
Strewn on the breezy continents I see  
The veined shells and burnished scales  
    which once  
Enclosed my being — husks that had  
    their use ;  
I brood on all the shapes I must attain  
Before I reach the Perfect, which is God,  
And dream my dream, and let the rab-  
    ble go ;  
For I am of the mountains and the sea,  
The deserts, and the caverns in the earth,  
The catacombs and fragments of old  
    worlds.

I was a spirit on the mountain-tops,  
A perfume in the valleys, a simoom  
On arid deserts, a nomadic wind  
Roaming the universe, a tireless Voice.  
I was ere Romulus and Remus were ;  
I was ere Nineveh and Babylon ;  
I was, and am, and evermore shall be,  
Progressing, never reaching to the end.

A hundred years I trembled in the  
grass,  
The delicate trefoil that muffled warm  
A slope on Ida ; for a hundred years  
Moved in the purple gyre of those dark  
flowers  
The Grecian women strew upon the  
dead.  
Under the earth, in fragrant glooms, I  
dwelt ;  
Then in the veins and sinews of a pine  
On a lone isle, where, from the Cyclades,  
A mighty wind, like a leviathan,  
Plowed through the brine, and from  
those solitudes  
Sent Silence, frightened. To and fro I  
swayed,  
Drawing the sunshine from the stooping  
clouds.

90     *THE METEMPSYCHOSIS.*

Suns came and went, and many a mystic  
    moon,  
Orbing and waning, and fierce meteors,  
Leaving their lurid ghosts to haunt the  
    night.  
I heard loud voices by the sounding  
    shore,  
The stormy sea-gods, and from fluted  
    conchs  
Wild music, and strange shadows floated  
    by,  
Some moaning and some singing. So  
    the years  
Clustered about me, till the hand of God  
Let down the lightning from a sultry  
    sky,  
Splintered the pine and split the iron  
    rock ;  
And from my odorous prison-house a  
    bird,  
I in its bosom, darted ; so we fled,  
Turning the brittle edge of one high  
    wave,  
Island and tree and sea-gods left be-  
    hind !  
Free as the air from zone to zone I  
    flew,

*THE METEMPSYCHOSIS.* 91

Far from the tumult to the quiet gates  
Of daybreak ; and beneath me I beheld  
Vineyards, and rivers that like silver  
threads

Ran through the green and gold of past-  
ure-lands,

And here and there a hamlet, a white  
rose,

And here and there a city, whose slim  
spires

And palace-roofs and swollen domes up-  
rose

Like scintillant stalagmites in the sun ;  
I saw huge navies battling with a storm  
By ragged reefs along the desolate  
coasts,

And lazy merchantmen, that crawled, like  
flies,

Over the blue enamel of the sea  
To India or the icy Labradors.

A century was as a single day.

What is a day to an immortal soul ?

A breath, no more. And yet I hold one  
hour

Beyond all price — that hour when from  
the sky

I circled near and nearer to the earth,

92    *THE METEMPSYCHOSIS.*

Nearer and nearer, till I brushed my  
wings  
Against the pointed chestnuts, where a  
stream,  
That foamed and chattered over pebbly  
shoals,  
Fled through the briony, and with a  
shout  
Leapt headlong down a precipice ; and  
there,  
Gathering wild-flowers in the cool ravine,  
Wandered a woman more divinely  
shaped  
Than any of the creatures of the air,  
Or river-goddesses, or restless shades  
Of noble matrons marvellous in their time  
For beauty and great suffering ; and I  
sung,  
I charmed her thought, I gave her  
dreams, and then  
Down from the dewy atmosphere I stole  
And nestled in her bosom. There I slept  
From moon to moon, while in her eyes a  
thought  
Grew sweet and sweeter, deepening like  
the dawn —  
A mystical forewarning ! When the  
stream,

*THE METEMPSYCHOSIS.* 93

Breaking through leafless brambles and  
dead leaves,  
Piped shriller treble, and from chestnut  
boughs

The fruit dropt noiseless through the au-  
tumn night,

I gave a quick, low cry, as infants do :  
We weep when we are born, not when  
we die !

So was it destined ; and thus came I  
here,

To walk the earth and wear the form of  
Man,

To suffer bravely as becomes my state,  
One step, one grade, one cycle nearer  
God.

And knowing these things, can I stoop  
to fret,

And lie, and haggle in the market-place,  
Give dross for dross, or everything for  
naught ?

No ! let me sit above the crowd, and  
sing,

Waiting with hope for that miraculous  
change

Which seems like sleep ; and though I  
waiting starve,

**94    *THE METEMPSYCHOSIS.***

I cannot kiss the idols that are set  
By every gate, in every street and park ;  
I cannot fawn, I cannot soil my soul ;  
For I am of the mountains and the sea,  
The deserts, and the caverns in the  
          earth,  
The catacombs and fragments of old  
          worlds.



































